701 554 645 Formerly, when war broke out and he was summoned to [117] Ouagadougou, the Tansoba [sic] assembled the principal ministers of the Mogho Naba at the home of his host, and his word was final.

Aside from this special case, he might call upon a minister, but then a servitor always brought along the cushion on which he would sit until the minister receives him in his private quarters. He was never received in public.

Once inside, the Tansoba occupied the best seat, and the minister got down on the floor and performed the Mossi salute.

In sum, the Tansoba was held in higher esteem than any other personage at the king's court.

645 574 (b) At the present time. Today ministers often visit each other. Since they have rapid means of transportation at their disposal, they regularly go about without escorts. Most often their visits are made in order to deal with matters of general interest.

645 576 574 When a minister calls upon another minister, he keeps his cap on and neither removes his shoes nor performs the kantissé. They are equals. This equality has been established by the local administration which has granted the same rights and salary to all. The minister shakes hands with his colleague and takes a seat. He is served copious quantities of beer, and then he takes his leave.

642 In spite of assertions to the contrary, the Mossi empire is politically disorganized. This accounts for the errors committed by the local administration and the [118] mistakes held against the ministers of the Mogho Naba who for a long time were granted too much power.

The Origin of Mossi Chiefdom (Legend), or the Way the Peulh, the Yarcé, and the Blacksmiths Salute Mossi Chiefs

● 773 184 576 The Peulh, the Yarcé, and, to a certain extent, the blacksmiths do not perform the kantissé (Mossi salute). They have a different way of saluting naba. A curious legend explains this phenomenon. However bizarre it may seem, it is not lacking in interest, and we shall tell it just as it was handed down to us.

•773 Origins of chiefdom. God first created four brothers. Like Adam and Eve in Paradise, they lived a life of ease without thought for tomorrow. When God saw this, he made four hàpidgou baskets and in them placed four miracles. The baskets were of different weights and shapes. Then he called the four brothers and said to them: "The future of each of you will depend on your choice." The eldest chose the heaviest basket, the second brother imitated his elder brother, the third took the largest basket, and the youngest took the last and smallest basket.

God then said to them: "Go forth into the world (that is, [119] Mossi country), and each of you build your house on a plain."

The next morning the four brothers started out. They came to a broad plain, and there the eldest brother remained. The three other brothers were grieved to leave him, but they continued on their way until each had found a place to settle.

It was then that the following miracles occurred.

1. The blacksmith (sayan in Mossi). Upon awakening the morning after he was established, the eldest brother found himself surrounded by a small family, large quantities of iron, and an anvil. These were the contents of his chosen kapidgou. The man at once realized that he was supposed to use the iron for something useful, so he set to work and, with God's help, discovered the hoe (wanka) and the axe (laré) which are essential for farming. Thus, he became a blacksmith (sayan).

2. The Peulh ("silmiga" in Mossi). The second brother, upon awakening, found himself surrounded by great numbers of oxen and cows, herded by some young men of his tribe. There was nothing in the way of shelter except a kind of crude hut (songdo), but he himself was very trim. His clothing was all white, and he had a white cap wound with a turban. He realized that he was the master of all of the beings around him, because he had only to give an order and large gourds filled with milk were at once brought to him. Thus, he became a Peulh.

3. The Yarga. The third brother, on waking, found [120] himself surrounded by donkeys laden with salt, kola nuts, and other articles of trade. Like his elder brother, the Peulh, he wore an ample white robe, but his cap was of a darker color. Thus, he

773 became the Yarga or tradesman.

4. The naba. As for the youngest brother, imagine his astonishment upon awakening to find himself in a splendid dwelling made up of many tata [houses] and surrounded by a real court with hundreds of courtiers, horses, and grooms. He saw a crowd approach and prostrate themselves in the Mossi salute as it is performed today. Furthermore, he had a harem. He realized that he was the uncontested master of all these people. Thus was created the naba.

These four brothers, however, could not endure having no news of each other. One day the eldest brother, the blacksmith, said to himself: "I am going to undertake a journey to find my brothers and learn what has happened to them." He started out, first taking care to provide himself with some of the tools he had made. When he reached the village, he had great difficulty in making his way through the herds of cattle and their herders. Finally he managed to present himself to the master of the place, the owner of so much wealth, and recognized his brother, the Peulh. The latter received him cordially and saw to it that abundant food, prepared in large part from milk, was served to him.

[121] After he had rested, the blacksmith told the Peulh the object of his journey, and the latter decided to accompany him. They left at dawn, the blacksmith with his load of daba (wanksé) and the Peulh followed by some of his cattle and by many bearers carrying gourds filled with milk for the journey. At nightfall they reached the village of their brother, the Yarga, whom they hardly recognized. For the first time they tasted kola nuts (gouré) which, they were told, came from komnoré (shores of great rivers). In short, the Yarga gave his brothers a worthy reception.

When the blacksmith and the Peulh told their brother that they were merely passing through to inquire about his health and that they were going on the next morning to seek their youngest brother, the Yarga, in turn decided to accompany them. All three set out with many followers. The tradesman loaded a donkey with salt, intending to sell some of it to people encountered along the way and to give the rest to his young brother.

They were overcome with both admiration and fear when they reached the youngest brother's house. They had heard along the

113 road -- but did not take the news seriously -- that their brother had become a "great naba," that he ruled over numerous subjects and that it would be difficult to approach the throne on which he sat. To their great surprise, all came about exactly as had been foretold. They encountered great difficulties in breaking through the rigid court protocol. They were repulsed by sogoné, jostled by grooms, and had to wait for hours [122] before His Majesty the Naba deigned to receive them as though they were the humblest of his subjects. In spite of their protestations, the courtiers of the naba had not for a moment believed that there might really be a family tie between these strangers and the one whom they regarded as a "god."

Flourishes on drums finally announced the appearance of the potentate. When he took his place on the throne (guéré), even though his three brothers were filled with wonder, jealousy nevertheless arose in their hearts. They looked at each other questioningly. Should they abase themselves as did his subjects? Here is what happened. The blacksmith sat down on the ground but did not imitate the Mossi salute. He merely struck the ground with his zanré. The Peulh, who was more arrogant, squatted, held his arms out in front, closed his fists, and then casually uttered these words: "Lafibé raoua, gang'bélafi" (literally, "Good day, man, how are you?"). He had kept his cap on but had left his néoda (shoes) at the door out of respect and fear. As for the Yarga, who was nearest to the naba, he sat down on the ground, slightly bent his legs, bowed a little, and finally rubbed his hands together slightly by way of salutation. He had also left his néoda at the door but had kept his cap on, like his brother, the Peulh.

The naba had them led to the home of one of his ministers and for several days saw to it that they were given copious meals and presented them with many gifts.

In return, the blacksmith presented the naba with a load of wanksé [123] (hoes) to cultivate his fields, the Peulh gave him some cattle, and the Yarga gave a bar of salt.

Finally they decided to leave their young brother and return to their respective villages. They took counsel along the way and decided to settle in the territory of the naba, thus making sure of his

773 protection. The Peulh would acquire more cattle by taking charge of the animals belonging to the Mossi, and the Yarga would find better markets for his salt and kola nuts. As for the blacksmith, he would make the many farm implements needed for the cultivation of the vast domains which were either not worked at all or insufficiently exploited because of the lack of tools.

They set the date for their return. Once more the naba received them very cordially, but they showed no greater deference to him than they had shown on their first visit.

And so the legend comes to an end by concluding that this is why the Peulh and the Yarga have retained their spirit of independence. As for the blacksmith, who remained poorer, he came [526] to submit to certain regulations which are common to all the Mossi although he never leaves his forge to salute the naba when he passes. As has already been noted, he merely strikes his zanré against his anvil, just as formerly he struck it on the ground by way of salutation.

[124] Chapter 8

Customs. Enthronement of the Naba. Names.

Death of a Mogho Naba

643 766 The death of a Mogho Naba is kept secret until the arrival at Ouagadougou of the Tansoba, who was forewarned when the illness became grave. On his arrival, the public is told that "the fire has gone out" (bougsaré kimé).

The personages in charge of the burial are Pazany'ting'soba (the undertaker), Tampouy Naba, Kassiri Naba, Benghin Naba, Toghin Naba, Ganin Naba, and Tanghin Naba.

The arrangement of the tomb. The grave in which the mortal remains of the king are buried is really a subterranean hut. Before the king is placed in his final dwelling (1), the following things

1. The body is wrapped in one or several cow hides.

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And you do not want to let her go!
Are you perchance this child's mother or father?
You are not the God who created her."

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832 The wennega consists mostly of back-and-forth movements of the hips in slow rhythm. Various figures are performed, but there is always the same rhythm and the same swaying of the hips. The sweetheart herself begins to dance, a curious fact, since women do not usually take part in the men's dances.

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776 We have noted that another form of Mossi dance is religious, the waongo. The waongo is a mysterious being, half animal, half spirit.

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776 Origin of the waongo. Tradition has it that this being was one day found all alone on a plain. Those who first saw him took fright and ran away. They went to tell the village elders, who assembled a goodly number of young men, armed [236] with arrows and sticks, to overcome this strange being.

He was not found at the place where he had first been seen. He had moved some distance away. The villagers surrounded him, and the elders, who had brought him a rooster, began to question him: "If he should be taken to the village, would he hurt the villagers? Would he bring misfortune?" The chicken was then sacrificed, but it is told that the sacrifice was not accepted.

The elders returned to the village and brought back a white rooster (norapelga), a he-goat (boéga), and a dog (bâga). Then they addressed the waongo, saying: "We were perhaps mistaken just now. Perhaps you wanted an animal in addition to the rooster we offered to you? If, by becoming our guest, you can bring us happiness, good health, and children, accept these offerings!" They slaughtered the rooster and the goat and killed the dog. This time the sacrifices were accepted.

[532] What the waongo is. The waongo consists of a mask, usually representing the head of an animal, and a bindou (a kind of long cloak made from the bark of the béringa shrub which is soaked in water for a long time to blacken it or from baobab fibers).

773 According to tradition, he had beside him a toabga (a kind of
535 magic axe) and a tibo (a sacred object, fetish).
776 The people captured him and put him in a safe place. But of what possible use could he be to them? Nobody knew. [237] He was something unknown and fearful.

One day the people had gone off to hold the kouré (funeral observances) of an old man and were on their way back home. They were warba dancers. They were all singing as they approached the house of the waongo, who came out. The dancers were terrified and ran away. Only one of the singers had the courage to remain behind.

He went on with the songs and the waongo followed him right up to the house of the deceased, and there he began to dance.

From this it was concluded that the waongo had something to do with funerals. Since that time the waongo is summoned whenever an old man or woman of the Nioniossé (soukoaba) dies. He never dances for deceased young people.

Since the waongo or, rather, the soukou is considered to be sacred and to embody a sort of religion which possesses secrets
[198] that should not be made known to everyone, a special language -- a deformation of the môré [Mossi] language -- has been invented. It is understood only by the initiates.

535 The waongo dances to the sound of a special tom-tom, accompanied by songs and praises in the secret language. The dance is of no special interest; it involves more or less frenetic movements, such as characterize most of the dances of the indigenous peoples.

The waongo is always accompanied by a circle of young men dressed in a narrow strip of cotton, decorated with cowries, and carrying satchels at their sides. These boys make movements with their heads which [238] are precisely like those made by circus
[534] horses. In addition to the tom-tom, flute players (wissé) accompany the dances.

535 We shall now speak of the true funeral dance, called warba.
764 It is performed by men wearing skirts, a kind of net shirt dyed blue, and headdresses made of cowrie shells. A long fringe, weighted

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

usually been banished from their patrilineage for some illegal act or had voluntarily left home after a dispute over inheritance of the nam, goods, or women.

The fact that noble lineages often absorbed sisters' sons was only one of the reasons why such lineages survived and expanded, even if only at the expense of other lineages within the local society. Another reason for this growth was that the nobles, possessing the nam and its prerogatives, received more wives than the commoners. They had more children and thus multiplied more rapidly. Mossi lineages were generally exogamous through their whole depth, but exogamy became increasingly mandatory as the segments became smaller. Marriage within a maximal lineage was permitted only when some of its members had moved so far away from its original locality that the original ties were either forgotten or ignored. The Mossi have myths in which the lineage founder gives his overly numerous descendants permission to marry certain of their relatives. Even so, if a marriage was actually found to have occurred between distant relatives, appropriate sacrifices had to be made to the ancestors.

Marriage was also forbidden between persons who could trace a common maternal ancestor. But because the time depth here was very shallow, total bilateral exogamy was practiced to a depth of only four or five generations. Of course, the differential concern with genealogies between those who had access to the nam and those who did not, had an effect on the extent to which exogamy was practiced.

Most Mossi marriages were based on an exchange of women between two lineages linked by a long-term series of reciprocal exchanges of goods and services. Women were regarded as the most valuable part of this system. In theory, only the Boodkasma of a babissi had the right to give a woman as a wife to another lineage. However, the initiators of the reciprocal relations between lineage segments were often babissi heads, Yirisobadamba (heads of nuclear families), or individual lineage members. When a man from one lineage "made friends" with a member of another and rendered him a service or received a favor from him, their respective lineages were considered to be involved. The corporate nature of the lineage segment was acknowledged by all persons engaged in reciprocal relations, and the relations between two individuals were seen as relations between their lineages.

When a man wished to give a daughter to a friend as a wife, he had to consult his Boodkasma, who then gave the woman to the friend's Boodkasma. The latter accepted the woman as a wife for the lineage rather than for the man involved. The lineage retained its rights *in gene-*